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ABSTRACT

A study compared the need for achievement of female undergraduates majoring in various areas of home economics versus those majoring in business administration. The Nach-Naff Scale was administered to 124 female undergraduate business administration and 133 home economics majors. Of the home economics majors, 31 were in child development, 34 in clothing/textiles, 33 in foods/nutrition, and 35 in housing/interior design. The students' ages ranged from 19 to 22, with a mean of 20.6. The housing/interior design majors had the highest achievement scores, followed by the clothing/textiles, foods/nutrition, and child development students. However, the business education majors had significantly higher scores when compared with the combined home economics majors. Because there appears to be a greater disparity in the achievement needs of students within home economics than between certain areas of home economics and business administration majors, it would seem appropriate to view home economics undergraduates as members of separate fields that are united by their shared concern with the family and its functions rather than as a single group. (MN)

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Need for Achievement vs. Need for Affiliation: An Investigation of Home Economics Undergraduate Students

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Running Head: Need for Achievement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the need for achievement among female undergraduates majoring in various fields of home economics as compared to those majoring in business administration. The Nach-Naff Scale was administered to female home economics and business administration majors. Data analyses involved comparison of achievement scores between the fields subsumed in home economics, and between home economics students as a group and business administration students. Results indicated housing/interior design majors had the highest achievement scores, followed by clothing/textiles foods/nutrition, and child development students. Business majors, however, had significantly higher scores when compared to the combined home economics majors. Findings indicate there is greater disparity in the achievement needs of students within home economics than between certain areas of home economics and business administration students. Results suggest it may be more appropriate to view home economics undergraduates as members of separate fields which are united by their shared concern with the family and its functions rather than as a single group.

Need For Achievement vs. Need for Affiliation: An Investigation of Home Economics Undergraduate Students

In recent years home economics professionals, particularly those working in institutions of higher education, have recognized the importance of documenting the characteristics of those being trained in the various subdisciplines of home economics. The remarkable diversity existing within the profession requires understanding of both the similarities and differences. In addition, the rapidly changing role of women in the work place has necessitated that greater attention be given to occupational values which influence not only vocational choice, but satisfaction with work itself. While the body of literature on vocational attributes of home economists continues to grow, there remains a need to further explore the personality characteristics of future home economists. These variables may not provide the definitive answer to predicting success as a home economist, but would certainly contribute to the further construction of a profile of the diverse population serving the profession.

From its onset, the core of home economics has always been the study of family functions and how families can better meet the needs of its members.[1,2,3] The assumption has been made that individuals pursue careers in home economics because it is a discipline in which people care for the well-being and optimal development of others, and thus in practice is high in "humanness."[4] Based on this view it has been inferred, perhaps erroneously, that individuals choose to concentrate their studies in home economics because of a high need for nurturance or to associate with others (i.e., need for affiliation), and therefore, lower needs for personal gain orachievement.

Considering the diverse areas subsumed within the profession (e.g., child development/family relations, clothing/textiles, consumer economics/management, foods/nutrition, housing equipment/home management, home economics education, and housing/interior design) it may be simplistic to assume students majoring in home economics areas can be described accurately as a group low in need for achievement and high in need for affiliation.

The need to achieve, as a personality construct, denotes greater independence, greater risk-taking, and entry into non-traditional (for females) occupations. Conversely, the need for affiliation denotes dependence, greater orientation toward interpersonal involvements, and entry into more female-dominated vocations.[5] Heckhausen maintains it is generally recognized that need for achievement (Nach) and need for affiliation (Naff) are negatively correlated.[6] Several studies have noted the absence of a "need for achievement" measure for women. Most instruments that assess the need to achieve have been developed and standardized using male respondents. Those few studies including women have looked at career selection in such fields as business, marketing, education, and nursing.[10] Little is known about women within the integrated discipline of home economics.

The purpose of the present investigation was to better understand the achievement and affiliation needs of undergraduate female students majoring in various areas of home economics. Specifically, comparisons of the need for achievement were made among students within the following areas: child development, clothing/textiles, foods/nutrition, and housing/interior design. Further comparison was made to determine if women majoring in home economics differed substantially from those concentrating in, business administration.

The business adminstration women were chosen because they had been focus of previous research. Additionally, business administration is a major in a profession having a "product" orientation rather than a "people" orientation. The two questions addressed were: (1) Do women concentrating in different areas within home economics demonstrate different levels of need for achievement/affiliation, and (2) Do women majoring in home economics differ significantly from those in business administration regarding their need for achievement/affiliation? It was believed the answers would provide a greater understanding of women who concentrate their undergraduate education in home economics.

Methodology

The participants were 257 female undergraduate: 124 were majoring in business administration and 133 in home economics. Of the home economics majors there were: 31 in child development, 34 in clothing/textiles, 33 in foods/nutrition, and 35 in housing/interior design. These students ranged in age from 19 to 22, with a mean age of 20.6 years. Each student responded to the question in their college classroom settings.

The questionnaire employed in this study was the Nach-Naff Scale developed by Lindgren.[11] This scale is based on Gough's Adjective Check List and consists of self-descriptive adjectives indicating need for achievement (Nach) and an equal number of contrast adjectives which measure need for affiliation (Naff).[8] The Nach-Naff Scale measures need for achievement by requiring respondents to choose between achievement- and affiliation-related self-descriptors.

In constructing the scale, Lindgren included only adjectives with positive affect in order to minimize subjects' defensiveness to self-disclosure.[11] The list of need for achievement adjectives was: aggressive, alert, ambitious, dominant, capable, efficient, enthusiastic, conscientious, independent, industrious, intelligent, resourceful, enterprising, assertive, persistent, planful, forceful, opportunistic, persevering, determined, busy, future-oriented, works best alone, thorough, accurate, and ingenious. Four adjectives (ambitious, enthusiastic, independent, and planful) were used twice. Words used to describe need for affiliation were: warm, trusting, sociable, talkative, thoughtful, appreciative, cheerful, kind, cooperative, good-natured, considerate, loyal, helpful, pleasant, contented, relaxed, mature, peaceable, praising, self-controlled, accepting, enjoys gossip, works best with others, curious, neighborly, friendly, sympathetic, and generous. The scale is scored in the achievement-oriented direction with the lowest possible score equal to zero and the highest possible score equal to 30: high scores indicate a strong need for achievement and a low need for affiliation, whereas low scores suggest a low need for achievement and a high need for affiliation. Lindgren reports the instrument has a test-retest reliability of .88, and a split-half, corrected reliability of .80.[11] When utilized with female subjects its concurrent validity has been demonstrated by statistically significant correlations with appropriate scales of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank.[5,9]

Profile of Nach-Naff Among Students

The mean GPA for business administration students was 3.01, and 2.96 for home economics students. The only significant difference in GPA was

Although the home economics students who participated were for the most part quite similar in their overall grade point averages, they were considerably different in their need for achievement. These results show that: (1) Students in child development were lowest in need for achievement, but highest in need for affiliation: employment for these students usually involves direct-service to others. Consequently, the need to be nurturant and associate with others may be a strength. A moderate need for achievement score for food/nutrition and clothing/textiles may be most desirable. (2) Many occupational options in this area involve the ability to provide direct services as well as the assertiveness needed for success in business management positions. (3) Housing/Interior design students displaying the highest need for achievement (a strength need for the competitiveness required primarily in business settings.

In contrast, students in the fields of interior design and foods/nutrition (the second highest achievement group) most likely will be seeking positions in business, and thus will need characteristics somewhat different from those required of direct-service professions such as child and family services. A close examination of need for achievement scores indicates students concentrating in housing/interior design and food/nutrition are more similar to those in business administration than they are to child development or clothing/textiles majors. To view students in these four subareas as similar because they fall under the curricular/professional umbrella of home economics is perhaps counterproductive. Their uniqueness must be recognized and their alliance with other disciplines appreciated if educators are to appropriately prepare

them for their careers, and if the strength and diversity of home economics is to continue. By maintaining a stereotypic view of home economics students, or allowing members of other disciplines to do so, we fail to best serve the next generation of home economists and insure their opportunity to develop fully as individuals and professionals. This is not to imply that home economics has not met the needs of its members in the past, but rather that it must recognize the state to which it has evolved if it is to continue to attract and serve new professionals.

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Table 1

Grade Point Average and Need for Achievement Scores

		GPA		Nach-Naff	
Student Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Child Development	31	3.01	.32	8.61	3.5
Clothing/Textiles	34	2.78	.44	11.71	4.8
Foods/Nutrition	33	3.01	.52	10.21	4.5
Housing/Interior Design	35	3.06	.44	12.14	4.6
Home Economics (combined)	133	2.96	.45	10.72	4.6
Business Administration	124	3.01	.45	13.71	4.8
All Students	257	2.99	.45	12.16	4.9